

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 159533

E.O. 11652:G S

TAGS: MO, PBOR, MASS, XA, XF

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BENGELLOUN'S INTRODUCTORY CALLS, JULY 6

REF: STATE 138431

1. AMBASSADOR BENGELLOUN CALLED ON UNDER SECRETARY HABIB AND SEPARATELY ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY VELIOTES ON AFTERNOON OF JULY 6. PRINCIPAL TOPICS OF DISCUSSION WERE TIMING OF VISIT BY KING HASSAN, INCLUDING POSSIBILITY OF A SEPARATE MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY VANCE AND FOREIGN MINISTER LARAKI, AND SAHARA DISPUTE. PARTICIPANTS ALSO BRIEFLY DISCUSSED MILITARY ASSISTANCE, GENERAL AFRICAN SITUATION, AND MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

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2. ROYAL VISIT: IN MEETING WITH HABIB, BENGELLOUN SAID HE WAS RETURNING TO RABAT FOR KING'S BIRTHDAY ON JULY 9, AND INQUIRED IF THERE WERE ANY MESSAGE ON TIMING FOR THE KING'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON THAT HE COULD CONVEY- HABIB SAID THAT THE MOST AUSPICIOUS TVME WOULD NOW APPEAR TO BE TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR. BENGELLOUN SAID THAT HE HAD HOPED

PERSONALLY THAT THE VISIT MIGHT BE IN "INDIAN SUMMER", I.E.

OCTOBER, WHICH WOULD COINCIDE WITH PEAK UNGA DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY, IN WHICH THE KING MIGHT WISH TO PLAY A ROLE. HABIB REPLIED THAT THE UNGA PEAK SEASON WAS ALWAYS A HECTIC TIME, AND FOR THIS REASON WE WERE THINKING OF HAVING THE KING'S VISIT SOMETIME LATER. HABIB SAID THAT WE WOULD TRY TO PIN DOWN A PROPOSED DATE ASAP AND WOULD GET BACK TO BENGELLOUN SHORTLY.

3. POSSIBLE VANCE-LARAKI MEETING: IN HIS MEETINGS WITH HABIB AND WITH ATHERTON, BENGELLOUN REFERRED TO HIS EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRETARY (REFTEL), AND ASKED IF IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND FOREIGN MINISTER LARAKI IN LATE AUGUST OR EARLY SEPTEMBER. ALTHOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD PRESUMABLY COME WITH THE KING, BENGELLOUN SAID LARAKI WOULD PROBABLY ALSO WANT TO MEET WITH THE SECRETARY SEPARATELY AND EARLIER ON UNGA MATTERS (READ SAHARA) IF THE KING'S VISIT WERE SCHEDULED CLOSE TO END OF YEAR. ATHERTON SAID HE WOULD BRING THIS QUESTION UP WITH THE SECRETARY.

4. SAHARA ISSUE: OPENING IN BOTH OF HIS MEETINGS WITH A REFERENCE TO THE OAU DECISION AT LIBREVILLE TO HOLD THE SPECIAL SUMMIT ON THE SAHARA IN LUSAKA IN OCTOBER, CONFIDENTIAL

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BENGELLOUN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT INDICATIONS IN PRESS THAT THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION MIGHT BE MORE SYMPATHETIC TO THE POLISARIO MOVEMENT AND TO THE ALGERIAN POSITION ON SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE WESTERN SAHARA. BENGELLOUN RECITED STANDARD MOROCCAN POSITION ON ALGERIAN ROLE--THAT ALGERIANS ARE SEEKING SUPREMACY IN NORTH AFRICA AND WISH TO SET UP A TRIBUTARY STATE IN FORMER SPANISH COLONY; THAT ALGERIAN ACCESS TO SEA WOULD EFFECTIVELY ISOLATE MOROCCO BY CUTTING IT OFF FROM THE REST OF AFRICA; THAT ALGERIANS HAD INITIALLY AGREED TO ANY COMPROMISE ON SAHARA THAT COULD BE ARRANGED BETWEEN MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA, AND HAD ONLY BEGUN TO SUPPORT POLISARIO WHEN THE TWO OCCUPYING COUNTRIES, TO ALGERIA'S GREAT SURPRISE, ;AD OVERCOME THEIR DISAGREEMENTS; THAT ALGERIAN ROLE IN SAHARA IS AN ESSENTIALLY ARTIFICIAL, ONE-MAN EFFORT BY BOUMEDIENE, WHILE MOROCCAN POLICY IS SUPPORTED BY ENTIRE MOROCCAN PEOPLE; THAT POLISARIO MOVEMENT WOULD AMOUNT TO NOTHING WITHOUT ALGERIAN ARMS AND AID.

5. BENGELLOUN SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE U.S. WAS CONSIDERING A CONTRIBUTION TO UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES FOR RELIEF FOR SAHARAN

REFUGEES. NATURALLY, HE HAD FOLLOWED THIS MATTER PARTICULARLY CLOSELY IN HIS PREVIOUS CAPACITY AS UN PERM REP, AND HE HAD HAD TO TAKE A STRONG POSITION IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF UNGA WHEN ALGERIA HAD ASKED FOR SPECIFIC ASSISTANCE TO THE SAHARAN REFUGEES, WHO WERE A MINOR FRACTION OF THE REFUGEES BEING DEALT WITH BY THE UNHCR. WERE ASSISTANCE FOR REAL HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND NOT FOR ALGERIAN POLITICAL PURPOSES, MOROCCO WOULD SUPPORT IT; IN FACT, BOTH MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA WERE PAYING FOR REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES TO SAHARA WHENEVER THEY DESIRED IT. BENGELLOUN SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD FULL CONFIDENCE IN PRINCE SADHRUDDIN KHAN'S FEEL FOR THE SITUATION. HE DID NOT THINK THAT KHAN WOULD PROCEED WITHOUT A CENSUS

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OF THE REFUGEE POPULATION IN THE TINDOUF AREA, AND IF A CENSUS WERE TAKEN, HE WAS CERTAIN THAT IT WOULD REVEAL THAT ALGERIAN CLAIMS RE NUMBERS OF TRUE SAHARAN REFUGEES ARE HIGHLY INFLATED. THE SPANISH CENSUS OF THE SAHARAN POPULATION HAD SHOWN A TOTAL OF 74 THOUSAND INHABITANTS. ALTHOUGH THIS FIGURE WAS SOMEWHAT ARTIFICIAL BECAUSE SO MUCH OF THE POPULATION IS NOMADIC, MOROCCO COULD SHOW THAT THERE ARE STILL AT LEAST 50,000 PEOPLE IN MOROCCAN-CONTROLLED SECTORS OF SAHARA. THESE PEOPLE ARE OF MOROCCAN NATIONALITY, THEY PARTICIPATED IN THE JUNE 1977 ELECTIONS, AND THEY WILL BE REPRESENTED IN THE NEW MOROCCAN PARLIAMENT.

6. ATHERTON ASKED IF THE SAHARA ISSUE WAS LIKELY TO COME UP AT THE 1977 UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. BENGELLOUN SAID THE OAU IS STILL SEIZED OF THE ISSUE BY LAST YEAR'S UNGA RESOLUTION, AND THE GA WOULD CERTAINLY NOT TAKE IT UP BEFORE THE PROJECTED LUSAKA MEETING. AFTER THAT, HOWEVER, MOROCCO COULD BE FACED WITH A SITUATION LIKE THE TIMOR VOTE. IN THAT CASE, INDONESIA HAD SUFFERED A DEFEAT NOT BECAUSE THERE WAS A MAJORITY AGAINST ITS POSITION, BUT BECAUSE SO MANY DELEGATIONS HAD ABSTAINED. BENGELLOUN SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THE SAHARA ISSUE WITH AMBASSADOR SCRANTON AND FOUND FULL U.S. UNDERSTANDING. HE HAD NOT YET TALKED TO AMBASSADOR YOUNG. ATHERTON SUGGESTED THAT HE DO SO. VELIOTES ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE U.S. TO WITHHOLD A CONTRIBUTION FOR AID TO THE SAHARA REFUGEES IF THE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS WERE FULFILLED FOR ACTION BY THE UNHCR, AND IF THE ASSISTANCE WERE OF A GENUINE HUMANITARIAN NATURE. BENGELLOUN WAS ASSURED THAT WE HAD TAKEN PAINS TO AVOID ACTIONS THAT COULD COMPLICATE THE SITUATION FOR MOROCCO, AND THAT WE WERE MAINTAINING OUR "HANDS-OFF" POLICY IN

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THE DISPUTE.

7. MILITARY ASSISTANCE: BENGELLOUN SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY BEEN EMPOWERED TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT FOR THE 30 MILLION DOLLARS IN FMS CREDITS TO MOROCCO EXPECTED IN FY 1977. IT WAS POINTED OUT TO BENGELLOUN THAT WE STILL HAVE CERTAIN PROCEDURES TO COMPLETE, INCLUDING PRESIDENTIAL WAIVER OF THE ANNUAL 40 MILLION DOLLAR FMS CREDIT CEILING FOR AFRICA, AND THAT WE WOULD GET BACK TO HIM AS SOON AS THESE PROCEDURES ARE COMPLETED.

8. SITUATION IN AFRICA: IN RESPONSE TO BENGELLOUN'S GENERAL QUERY, HABIB SAID WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE LIBYAN ROLE IN CHAD AND ABOUT CONTINUING INSTABILITY IN THE HORN, BUT THAT THE SITUATION IN THE REMAINDER OF THE CONTINENT SEEMED SATISFACTORY FOR THE MOMENT. HABIB RECALLED PRESIDENT CARTER'S HIGHLY FAVORABLE COMMENTS ON THE MOROCCAN ROLE IN ZAIRE AND ADDED AS A PRIVATE COMMENT THAT KING HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY ADEPT AT MANAGING MOROCCAN INTERVENTION SO AS TO GET OUT PROMPTLY WITHOUT GETTING "STUCK IN AFRICAN MUD." WITH REGARD TO RHODESIA AND ZIMBABWE, THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION IS ON TRACK, AND THE RESULTS SHOULD BE EVIDENT BY THE END OF THE YEAR. BENGELLOUN SAID HE FEARED COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF THE SITUATION IF THE PROCESS WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL. HABIB AGREED, BUT SAID THERE ARE INHERENT LIMITATIONS ON SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFRICA. THE SOVIETS HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE AS ARMS SUPPLIERS, BUT HAVE CONTRIBUTED LITTLE TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION. THE AFRICANS APPEAR INCREASINGLY CONSCIOUS OF THIS, AND WE WERE ENCOURAGED BY THE RESULTS OF THE LIBREVILLE OAU MEETING, AT WHICH THE MODERATES APPEAR TO HAVE CARRIED THE DAY.

9. MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS: ATHERTON EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR HASSAN'S ROLE IN HELPING BUILD BRIDGES  
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BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND NEIGHBORING ARAB STATES, WHICH WILL IN TIME SERVE TO ATTENUATE DEEP MUTUAL FEARS. VELIOTES ADDED THAT THE BEN SHIMON VISIT TO RABAT WAS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE. ATHERTON SAID THE NEXT IMPORTANT DIPLOMATIC STEP WOULD BE THE CARTER-BEGIN MEETING, THEN A SECOND MIDDLE EAST TRIP BY SECRETARY VANCE, THEN PREPARATIONS FOR A GENEVA MEETING. AT THIS STAGE WE WOULD

WISH TO CONSULT FURTHER WITH KING HASSAN.

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